



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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March 12, 2013

Dr. Freeman Williams
Superintendent
Christina School District
600 N. Lombard Street
Wilmington, DE 19801

To Dr. Williams & the Christina School District Board:

The Delaware Department of Education (DOE) received the Christina School District's (CSD) "Race to the Top (RTTT) Amendment #4" on February 26, 2013. Since then, CSD's amendment has been thoroughly reviewed by DOE's leadership team. The amendment, in its current form, will not be approved by DOE. The rationale for this position and the opportunity to re-submit Amendment #4 for final review are outlined herein.

CSD's state-approved RTTT plan (Objective 5) pledged to "align resources as well as the plan for implementation with the State sponsored incentive assistance program," which included \$243,642 to "develop incentives for teachers to work in high-needs schools" to "increase the concentration of highly-effective teachers and leaders in high-need schools." Amendment #4 to CSD's district plan, as submitted, deviates significantly from CSD's original commitment to "align resources as well as its plan for implementation with the State sponsored incentive program." DOE considered the substantive nature of the proposed shift and the content of the amendment itself upon review.

Amendment #4 as submitted was not approved for the following reasons:

The amendment does not meet the overarching objective (Objective 5) to "increase the concentration of highly-effective teachers and leaders in high-need schools" because:

- a. The amendment disregards state regulation that defines "highly-effective"
- b. The amendment does not include all of CSD's high-need schools as defined by DOE; instead, it includes only Partnership Zone (PZ) and Focus schools
- c. The amendment does not provide leadership opportunities for select, top-performing educators working in CSD's high-need schools
- d. The amendment does not develop incentives for teachers and leaders to work in the district's high-need schools that are competitive in retaining or attracting educators to CSD given the surrounding landscape

In considering amendments, DOE also examines relevant district and state data. In this case, DOE's data analysis confirms that the ten high-need schools from CSD invited into the state initiative face significant challenges in retaining educators. Of the teachers who were working in the ten CSD high-need schools in 2007-2008, only 25% were still there in 2011-2012. While this could be attributed to several factors, CSD's attrition rate in its high-need



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schools during that five year period was significantly higher than that of all other high-need schools in Delaware. The retention rate amongst all other high-need schools (39) invited to participate in the state's Delaware Talent Cooperative was 47% during that same period.

The gap between high-need schools in CSD and all other schools within CSD over this same period is also striking. Of the teachers working in CSD schools in 2007-2008 that have not been designated high-need by the state, 57% remained in those CSD schools by 2011-2012. That represents a 32 percentage point difference in retention between CSD's high-need schools and the district's other schools over that same period. Retention in CSD schools without a high-need designation was thus more than twice that in CSD's high-need schools.

In its letter to CSD one month ago (attached), DOE stated that as part of Delaware's RTTT plan the state and participating districts agreed to pursue a set of strategies to "ensure the equitable distribution of effective educators" both statewide and at the district-level. It was also noted that each district agreed to the RTTT Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). CSD's approved district plan met these standards; its Amendment #4 does not.

With respect to CSD's non-compliance to its commitments, DOE requires that CSD provide a written response within fifteen days that does one of the following:

- a) Significantly revises Amendment #4 to its plan with due consideration given to the feedback herein. This amendment will be subject to DOE approval and will follow the conditions outlined in the "Subgrantee Race to the Top Monitoring Plan"; or
- b) Indicates participation in the Delaware Talent Cooperative as one key strategy for increasing the concentration of highly-effective educators in high-need schools.

Should CSD choose neither option or if "option a" is selected and DOE amendment approval not granted, or if the district shall otherwise fail to meet the aforementioned conditions associated with being removed from non-compliant status as described herein and in the state's previous letter on this matter, DOE will begin to initiate the process of withholding the entirety of district RTTT funding for Year 4 of the grant (\$2,396,850).

DOE requires a written response from CSD in which the district revises Amendment #4 or selects to participate in the state initiative no later than March 29, 2013.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Ruszkowski".

Christopher N. Ruszkowski
Chief Officer, Teacher & Leader Effectiveness Unit (TLEU)
Delaware Department of Education